

Wetlands Protection

2001 Iowa SCORP

An outline map of the state of Iowa is positioned behind the text "2001 Iowa SCORP". The map shows the state's irregular borders, including its northern, eastern, and southern edges.

Introduction –The Worth of a Wetland

Unfortunately, most of Iowa's wetlands were gone before anyone gave much serious thought to the values of such areas. Today we can only imagine the vast and diverse system of prairie marshlands totaling almost 2 million acres (Bishop and Van Der Valk, 1982). Early Iowa settlers and their descendants have had to deal with the harsh realities associated with making a living from the Iowa landscape. Consequently, productive marshes were converted into productive croplands.

The "Swamp Land Act of 1850" granted some 1.2 million acres of wetlands to the State of Iowa for swamp reclamation. Counties bartered and sold these lands for as little as 25 cents an acre, often to immigration companies with the condition that they put settlers on the lands.

To those early Iowa settlers, the worth of a marsh lay only in their ability to easily drain it and convert it to productive farmland. That pattern, begun in the late 1800's persisted and grew. By 1938, only 50,000 acres of prime marshland remained in Iowa (Bennet, 1938). Today there are about 27,000 acres of natural marsh. The early challenge, that of eliminating the state's marshlands and replacing them with croplands, now stands at 96.5 percent completed; and a more recent challenge, that of protecting and restoring wetlands for their other values, has only just begun.

It was not until the late 1930's that a public perception of the worth of a wetland left in its natural condition evidenced itself. In 1937 the Pittman-Robertson Act was passed, creating a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition. The Iowa Conservation Commission, utilizing state funds and federal cost-sharing funds, began to purchase remaining wetlands because of their high value as wildlife production and ecological areas.

Today, publicly-owned natural marshes total nearly 25,000 acres in Iowa (excluding the Mississippi River). An additional 29,800 acres of artificially-created or restored marshes have been established. Relatively few acres (about 10,000) of natural prairie marshlands remain in private ownership, and there is a priority by natural resource agencies and private interests to secure permanent protection for the remaining fragments. Additionally there are opportunities to restore at least some of the wetlands that have been lost.

As is too often the case, the worth of wetlands as high quality natural areas with abundant opportunities for wildlife, recreation and education uses, has been slow to receive broad-based public support. Only when the last fraction of a percent of these wetlands remained was there sufficient interest generated to protect them. Fortunately, recognition of this worth has increased, with the requirement of this planning document as just one more indication of a growing concern with the protection and restoration of wetland resources in Iowa and in the rest of the United States.

There is also evidence that the other values of wetlands are being recognized and appreciated. Wetlands are important in the maintenance of the quality and quantity of groundwater supplies. Wetlands also have the capacity to store floodwaters temporarily, and, in some instances, to reduce the volume and severity of floods. Such values ultimately translate into economic savings stemming from reduced water treatment costs, improved health status and reduced flood damages.

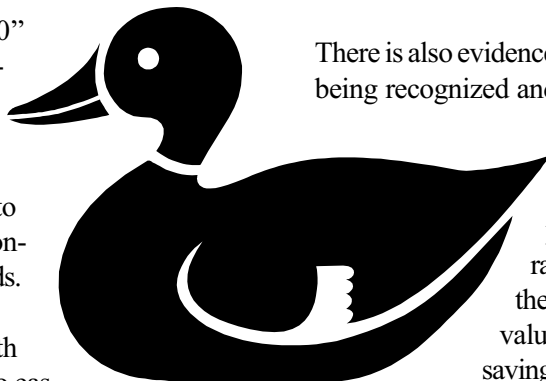
Additionally, waterfowl hunters and nature study enthusiasts find wetlands as attractive and essential resources to support their pastimes, and direct economic and tourism benefits are derived.

Iowa's Remaining Wetlands

Iowa's remaining high-priority wetlands are not evenly distributed across the state. Glaciers, particularly the Des Moines Lobe of the Wisconsin Glacier, played major roles in making Iowa what it is today, including the state's wetland resources.

The topography, soil types and resultant land use patterns in Iowa often provide dramatic evidence of the periodic advance and retreat of glaciers. The natural lakes and prairie potholes of north central and northwest Iowa are clearly associated with the Des Moines Lobe of the Wisconsin Glacier.

These prairie pothole marshes are not the only significant wetlands in Iowa. The many interior rivers and streams traversing the state provide additional wetland resources. All of these rivers, but most notably the Cedar and Wapsipinicon, provide high-quality wetlands associated with side channels, overflow areas and old oxbows.



Iowa's border rivers, the Mississippi and Missouri, provide a startling contrast in wetland resources. The Mississippi on one side has been altered by a series of navigational locks and dams which actually expanded surface water resources, and the Missouri River on the other side has been dramatically impacted by channelization projects, resulting in losses of over 500,000 acres of wildlife habitat (much of it of a wetland nature). Though these major border rivers are very different from each other, both possess substantial wetland values or potentials that warrant high-priority attention in any plan to improve wetland resources in Iowa.

Restoration Benefits

The multiple benefits of wetlands have increasingly been recognized in recent years. Waterfowl were and continue to be of prime consideration in wetland protection and restoration efforts. The awareness of the importance of wetlands to non-waterfowl migratory bird species has also increased, and these species are now taken into consideration when wetland restoration plans are prepared. The protection of uplands surrounding restored wetlands has also been emphasized in recent years. Permanent grasslands surrounding these wetlands not only provide nesting habitat for waterfowl, but also for a wide variety of other grassland nesting birds. Many of these neo-tropical migrant species have experienced drastic population declines and the restoration and protection of extensive tracts of grasslands are important to their survival. Stable wetland/grassland systems have also been recognized as important to a variety of fish, amphibian, reptile and mammal species. Native prairie protection and warm season grasses and forb planting also provide habitat for a variety of butterfly and other beneficial invertebrate species.

The recreation potential provided by wetland complexes can add to the quality of life for area residents and provide financial benefits through hunting, trapping and other tourism related income. These areas serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education purposes and other nature study pursuits such as wildlife photography and birdwatching.

Wetlands, when associated with surrounding protected uplands, provide well documented water quality ben-

efits. Wetlands serve as filters to remove silt and chemical pollutants from surface waters and can help to purify and recharge ground water supplies. They serve as sponges to absorb, store and slowly release surface water with a resulting reduction in flood waters.

Iowa Wetlands Protection Plans

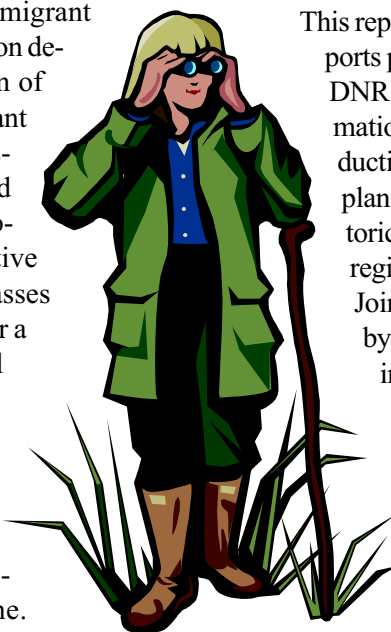
Iowa's wetlands are broken into two areas. The prairie pothole region describes north central and northwest Iowa. This portion of the state is characterized by a relatively flat, poorly drained landform that was shaped and flattened by ice masses during the Wisconsin and Iowan glacial periods. The other wetland regions consist of areas associated with the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and their tributaries. These areas of the state are characterized by gently rolling hills and are better drained in comparison to the prairie pothole region.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources refers to three plans to provide for protection and restoration of wetlands in Iowa.

Identification of Potential Wetland Complex Restorations in the Prairie Pothole Region of Iowa (Revised March 1999)

This report is an update and consolidation of two reports prepared by the Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa DNR in 1988. The previous plans included information on wetland management, waterfowl production and species lists not found in the current plan. Additional biological, geological and historical information on the Iowa prairie pothole region can be found in the "Iowa Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Implementation Plan" published by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in 1990.

The original reports were compiled following a series of public input meetings and utilizing guidance from a group of individuals called the "Wetland Coordinating Committee for the Iowa Prairie Pothole Joint Venture". This committee was made up of representatives from a wide variety of government conservation agencies, and non-government conservation organizations. The committee has been realigned since that time and now includes a greater representation from private landowners. It is now called the "Iowa Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Steering Committee".



The current report was also written by staff wildlife biologists of the Wildlife Bureau of the Iowa DNR, drawing upon guidance provided by the original public input and committee meetings. It is intended as a working guide for the identification and protection of wetland complex areas that still have a potential for wetland restoration and associated upland protection. It recognizes that a wide variety of options are available for wetland protection including, but not restricted to, the acquisition of lands from willing sellers by public agencies. Other options are targeted at wetland and upland protection and restoration while keeping the land in private ownership. These options include short and long-term easements, tax incentives, and financial and technical assistance to private landowners for the restoration and maintenance of these habitat types.

North American Waterfowl Management Plan Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Region Joint Venture – Implementation Plan, 1998

The original version of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was implemented in 1986. The strategic plan was designed to address concerns about long-term declines in waterfowl populations, linked to dramatic losses of wetlands and upland nesting habitats. The plan identified habitat loss and degradation as the major waterfowl management problem in North America.

There have been several changes to the plan since it was implemented in 1986. Joint ventures were established as partnerships in geographical areas became organized. The Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture was established in 1993. The Joint Venture established goals for the region and as well as state-specific objectives and strategies.

Iowa's objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: Conserve 267,500 acres of breeding waterfowl habitat, supporting an annual breeding duck population of 63,000.

Objective 2: Conserve 24,000 acres of migratory waterfowl habitat.

Iowa's strategies include the two main topics of breeding habitat and migrational habitat. Each topic is followed by a list several strategies to address breeding and migrational habitats in Iowa. Also discussed in the plan are focus areas within the state outlining where efforts need to be concentrated.

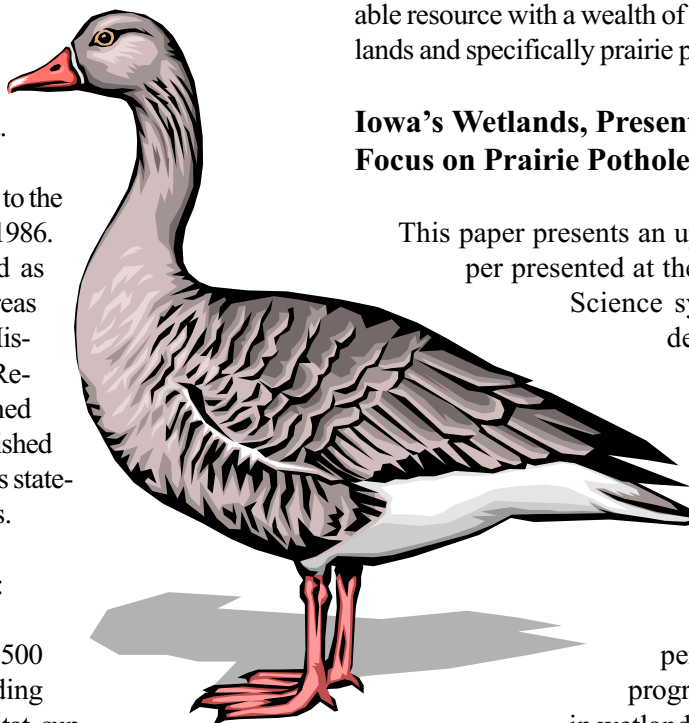
Iowa Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Implementation Plan – February 1990

This document was prepared by the IDNR in February 1990 and lists a series of goals, objectives, strategies and priority tasks that have since become outdated. This plan is worthy of mention because of two main factors. The first is the benefits that can be gained by examining past objectives and goals while setting future objectives and goals. It is also possible to see what has been accomplished as a result of the plan and whether the desired results were obtained. The other side of that is to examine what has not been accomplished and determine whether it is still a priority. The second factor that makes the plan worth mentioning is the amount of biological, geological and historical information on the Iowa prairie pothole region that is contained within the plan. This plan is a valuable resource with a wealth of information related to wetlands and specifically prairie potholes in Iowa.

Iowa's Wetlands, Present and Future with a Focus on Prairie Potholes - 1998

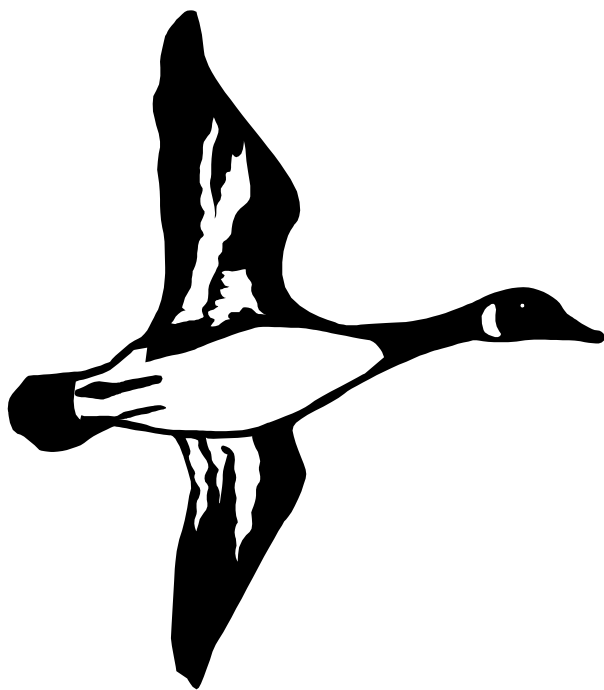
This paper presents an update to the wetlands paper presented at the 1980 Iowa Academy of Science symposium on the state's declining flora and fauna.

Three staff members of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Fisheries Division wrote this paper. The paper presents information including a historical perspective, legislation and programs implemented to assist in wetland protection and a series of areas that require energy to be focused in the future. The areas of focus are summarized as follows:



1. Sustain the momentum that is currently driving the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP). (Both programs are detailed in the paper.)
2. Active participation by both the public and private is needed to maintain the current momentum for wetland protection and restoration. The State Legislature and the U.S. Congress must be urged to fund wetland programs.
3. Public support is needed to help Congress determine which wetlands are worthy of protection.
4. The scientific community must continue to explore and document the values of wetlands.
5. Wetland databases must be refined and verified on the ground so that future losses and gains can be measured.
6. Long-term operation and maintenance funding will be needed for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to manage the WRP and EWRP easements that remain in private ownership.

For more information on these plans and wetland protection efforts in Iowa, contact Dale Garner, Executive Officer 2, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Fisheries Division at 515/281-7127.



Open Project Selection Process (OPSP)

2001 Iowa SCORP

An outline map of the state of Iowa is positioned behind the text "2001 Iowa SCORP". The map is a simple black outline showing the state's irregular shape, including its northern and southern borders.

OPEN PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS
STATE OF IOWA
LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND
LOCAL PROJECT APPLICATIONS
2001

MAY 2001

INTRODUCTION

The following pages describe the process for evaluating and establishing priorities for awarding cost-sharing grants to local political subdivisions under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program. The LWCF is administered at the federal level by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Each year, congress appropriates funds to be used for cost-sharing with states and their political subdivisions for the acquisition and/or development of outdoor recreation projects.

In Iowa, the LWCF is administered by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources from its central offices in the Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034. Grants are administered by the Grants Bureau of the IDNR, Mark Slatterly, Chief. Planning programs associated with the LWCF are administered by the Program Administration Bureau of the Parks, Recreation and Preserves Division, Arnie Sohn, Chief.

Administrative rules have been developed and approved under Chapter 17A, Code of Iowa. Those rules are recorded in Section 571-27 of the Iowa Administrative Code, and should be referred to for additional detail on the LWCF. In addition, the IDNR annually publishes "Guidelines for Local Participation" in the LWCF. This publication includes a copy of the administrative rules, general instructions for completing an application, the application form itself, and any other specific information relevant to the funding cycle which is forthcoming. Copies of this publication are mailed to all city clerks in Iowa, all county conservation boards, regional planning agencies, RC&D offices, and to individuals who have requested their names and addresses be placed on a mailing list.

This Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) has been developed to provide potential grant applicants and other interested parties with the knowledge on how the State of Iowa will evaluate and rank all eligible project applications. The awarding of a 50 percent grant is an action to commit funds to acquire and/or develop an outdoor recreational project that is in accord with local plans and priorities. Projects selected for cost-sharing with LWCF must also be in accord with State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) priorities to the greatest extent possible. The State is required to periodically publish a SCORP which provides an overview of the supply, demand, needs and recommended actions to address outdoor recreation issues. The SCORP is typically a 5-year document prepared by the Program Administration Bureau of the Iowa DNR and approved by the National Park Service. Local project sponsors are required to provide evidence of the planning processes which led to a project application. Such evidence may include public surveys, public hearing records, approved local plans, etc.

SCORP is properly considered as both a planning document and a planning process. The 2001 Iowa SCORP includes several supplements which are special studies addressing more focused areas of concern in a more detailed manner. These supplements include such things as: (1) Iowa Trails 2000; (2) Iowa DOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Plan; (3) five Protected Water Area management plans; (4) Iowa Forest Resources Plan; (5) "Recreational Activities & Environmental Opinions: A Statewide Survey of Adult Iowans"; and other plans as they are developed. The Iowa SCORP recognizes that no statewide planning document or process can full address specific local recreational needs and opportunities of Iowa's 99 counties and 950+ communities. Consequently, heavy reliance is placed on local planning documents, planning processes and justification statements provided by LWCF applicants in their applications for funding.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING APPLICATIONS

Following are the criteria and weighting factors included in Chapter 571-27 of the Iowa Administrative Code as the areas under which each local project application will be scored. Applications are evaluated independently by a 3-member review and selection committee. Each criterion is given a score from 1 to 10 and that score is then multiplied by the weight factor. In addition, bonus and penalty points are listed below and described in administrative rules and application packets.

<u>CRITERIA</u>	<u>WEIGHT FACTOR</u>
Relationship to SCORP Priorities	5
Direct Recreational Benefits	1
Local Needs	1
Quality of the Site	1

BONUS AND PENALTY POINTS

Planning processes and relationships—Up to 3 bonus points
Minority population being served—Up to 3 bonus points
Special elderly/handicapped features—3 bonus points
No prior LWCF assistance---5 bonus points
Fair share allocation---Up to 5 penalty points

EXPLANATION OF CRITERIA

Quality of Site

Certain types of land resources and development lend themselves more readily to selected recreational uses. Factors such as topography, vegetation, location in relation to the people who will use the facility, access and adjacent land use all enter into the assessment of a project's site quality. A flat cropfield adjacent to a residential area has little value for those types of recreational activities typically found in wooded hills adjacent to one of Iowa's rivers. However, for development of a ballfield complex, the cropfield may be ideal. No clearing is required, very little grading and earthwork is needed, potential users live nearby and could safely get access to the sports complex, etc. Therefore site quality may be excellent relative to the intended use of the land.

Many of the SCORP supplements include detailed assessments of a resource base and recommendations as to which areas have the highest priority for protection or public use opportunities. For example, the Iowa Protected Water Areas General Plan examined most of Iowa's 19,000 miles of rivers and streams and recommended which of them warrant priority for protective measures. More detailed management plans developed for each of the five designated rivers take this identification of priorities one step further. Also the "Iowa Trails 2000" report compiled by the Iowa DOT identifies high priority trail corridors and mechanisms for pursuing implementation of trails in Iowa. The Iowa DOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan takes this general statement of priorities one step further and recommends specific trail segments as most important to making meaningful progress toward the overall goals of trail development in Iowa.

In the case of many local projects, there is no similar statewide assessment of resource quality and needs. However, project applicants are encouraged to provide evidence of planning processes which logically look at similar considerations from a local perspective. Ballfields, swimming pools, tennis courts, picnic grounds, campgrounds, etc., all can be made to fit in a variety of locations. However, the expense involved in making a poor site into a good one (or at least a better one) often provides graphic evidence of poor site quality. In the example of ballfield development, if an inordinate amount of the total budget is going for earthwork, it is a clear signal that the site is not a level one and that it in fact is probably not a good site for a ballfield in the first place. While there may be many valid arguments that it is the only site available, committee judgement and scoring may indicate that some other equally valuable addition to another city's recreational resources is more feasible and much less expensive relative to the benefits to be realized.

Relationship to SCORP Priorities

As part of the updating process to complete the 2001 Iowa SCORP an advisory committee was assembled to identify issues and priorities as viewed from a wide spectrum of recreation users and providers. The committee identified an extensive list of issues and priorities that are represented by eleven general areas of focus. These lists of general focus areas and the list of twelve more specific issue areas should be reviewed relative to each criterion as applications are completed. The eleven general areas of focus are:

Resource Protection
Partnerships
Education
Funding
Land Acquisition
Facility Maintenance
Marketing
Shared Resources
Trends
Analysis
Safety and Access for Persons with Disabilities

In addition to these general areas of focus, the SCORP Advisory Committee compiled a list of outdoor recreation issues in need of special consideration. That list includes the following:

- Better marketing of outdoor recreational opportunities using latest technologies
- More use of partnerships between various agencies and special user groups
- Education for all ages in outdoor skills and stewardship ethics
- Education of public and policy makers on importance of outdoor recreation
- Need for additional funding and coordinated awareness program on funds that are already available
- Increased acquisition of lands and waters representative of various ecological communities and landforms throughout the state, with management to assure preservation
- Recreational developments appropriate to particular land area and incorporating protection of sensitive natural areas
- Need to define and preserve areas to remain primitive, areas that are resources to the state, nation and world. Expand and buffer parks. Protect representative landscapes in each landform region.
- Education of Iowans in order to increase awareness and appreciation of natural resources
- Need for renovation and maintenance of existing facilities to ensure equal access for all users and ensure that all new projects will provide for access for all
- Future recreational opportunities should focus on attracting all ages of people to Iowa and promotion of health and wellness in Iowa. Broaden focus to accommodate new trends in recreation (i.e. paintball areas, skate parks, rollerblading, ATVs, etc.)
- Role of private lands for recreation is an area that should be expanded upon

This list is not inclusive of every recreation/resource issue that will arise during the tenure of the current SCORP. Local project applicants have a responsibility for addressing applicable issues, but they may also make the case for many other specific issues which are of high priority to them. As with other criterion, the project review and selection committee will be called upon to use their judgement in determination of appropriate scores and rankings, and those projects which directly address identified high-priority issues will likely score higher than those which don't.

Direct Recreational Benefits

This criterion is a reflection of the diversity of recreation opportunities provided by a project and the range and numbers of persons who will benefit through use of the facility or facilities to be provided. As a simple example, a multi-purpose trail will score higher than a single-purpose trail. Projects with a low capacity for users and a low

turnover rate by those users (e.g. tennis courts) may score lower than projects having a large capacity and/or a high turnover rate. These are considerations that logically fit within SCORP discussions of issues.

There will always be a need for planning, coordination and research to make the most effective and efficient use of Iowa's recreational resources. This implies a multiple use philosophy and a policy of developing those areas and projects where recreational benefits from a dollar expended are maximized in terms of numbers of recreational pastimes provided. The same general philosophy will apply to locally sponsored projects seeking cost-sharing and will be one consideration in arriving at a score for this criterion.

Local Need

Determination of "need" is at times subjective, and may be difficult to separate or distinguish from "want". However, relative need remains a legitimate criterion and should be assessed to the best of the applicant's ability to measure and portray it. Applicants for LWCF assistance are encouraged to accurately describe the level of need for projects applied for. Documentation of that need may include the results of local public meetings, local surveys, facts and figures on crowding, statistics of increasing population levels and accompanying increased levels of use on existing facilities, etc. Local sponsors are in the best position to understand and to present in writing what their recreational needs are. This local representation of need is a major portion of the score to be granted under this criterion.

At times, recreation "standards" may also be used to illustrate a local entity's low level of supply of given recreational areas and facilities relative to what is recommended as a desirable level. For example, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and other entities have published documents that can help to identify recreational standards which can, at times, be used to help build a valid case for a project's "need."

Bonus and Penalty Points

No Prior Assistance---Any applicant that has never received an LWCF grant will be given a bonus of five points.

Elderly and Persons with Disabilities---Projects which have special features for the elderly and persons with disabilities above normal access requirements for this population will receive a bonus of three points.

Minority Population---Projects which serve an area of greater minority population than the state average of 2.6 percent will receive up to three bonus points.

Planning Processes and Relationships---Projects should show evidence of having been through the normal channels of review and approved by proper local decision makers, thereby assuring that public support and a commitment to operate and maintain the facility are present. In addition, consideration is also given if there is evidence that the project is a part of broader plans which exist. For example, a short trail segment connecting a small town with a nearby park may at first glance appear to be an isolated project. However, if that short segment is actually meeting part of a long-range goal of providing inter-city or inter-park trail links, it takes on added significance. That significance relates to the fact that the short segment will provide an important connecting link in the overall project plan, and its development will help generate support for other segments of the long-range project. If these two conditions are well documented, up to three bonus points will be awarded.

This is an important bonus category in that it can lead to better quality projects, avoids unnecessary duplication of facilities, taps new sources of funding and support, and results in a broader and deeper commitment to operating and maintaining the facility once it is developed.

Prior Assistance Fair Share---Any applicant that has received prior assistance which is more than their calculated fair share will be assessed up to five penalty points. (See Iowa Administrative Code Section 571-27.6(3)a for detailed fair share penalty point categories).

The above-described criteria and bonus points result in a total maximum project score of 94 points. Of that total, at least 50 points are directly defined as SCORP-related.

Any project not scoring at least 60 points is returned to the applicant. Others are funded within limits of available federal cost-sharing apportionments. Projects are ranked according to their score and funded in the order of that score. Projects too far down the priority list to receive federal cost-sharing are returned to the applicant and may be resubmitted during the next annual application/funding cycle.

The Natural Resource Commission will review all committee recommendations for each review period at the following NRC meeting. The NRC may reject any application selected for funding or approve any application not selected. The National Park Service will also review any application selected for funding for final review and grant approval.